

#### Gold Creek pond EA comments 5.2.24

The USFS proposal for the Gold Creek pond involves filling in the pond and creating a wetland. The purpose and need for the project is to improve bull trout habitat in Gold Creek so that bull trout populations can improve and thrive. The proposed alternative will have negligible benefit to improving stream flows in Gold Creek while having significant environmental impacts. The biggest benefit of this proposal will be creating amphibian habitat through construction of the wetland at the pond site. Creating habitat improvement for amphibians is not part of the purpose and need of the project. Significant environmental impacts include the consumption of approximately 750,000 cubic yards of either gravel or common borrow which is a natural resource. Consumption of approximately 320,000 gallons of diesel fuel (just from hauling in borrow-this doesn't account for equipment at the jobsite). which is a contributor to climate change, in fact the bull trout habitat has been affected by climate change over the last century by warmer temperatures, lower snowpack, reduced rainfall and hence reduced stream flows. Hauling in the borrow fill will result in about 55,000 dump trucks coming into and out of the project site which will lead to significant air and noise pollution levels. This haul road is adjacent to the USFS's newly created wildlife corridor and it will lead to stress on wildlife in the corridor. Other impacts include warm, and possibly turbid water getting discharged into Gold Creek as the pond water is getting displaced by the fill material, which is not good for bull trout. Finally, this popular recreation site will be altered by the proposed alternative, and both this recreation area and recreational areas up valley will not be accessible by the public for up to 10 years. The impact of closing these recreational areas will present significant impacts to the surrounding communities resulting increased traffic and parking congestion as recreationalists look to visit other nearby areas. Based on comments heard at the open house on April 24, 2024 it doesn't sound like the project team had much engagement with the Snoqualmie Pass community to discuss impacts to the community.

I am requesting that an Environmental Impact Statement be performed due to the significant impacts that will occur if the EA proposal to fill in Gold Creek pond moves forward. These impacts are a result of creating amphibian habitat (the pond becoming a wetland) with negligible benefits to Gold Creek and bull trout habitat. Changing the NEPA document from an EA to an EIS will allow other alternatives to be considered and evaluated taking into account environmental impacts. For instance, one alternative, a flow control structure at the pond will provide a better benefit for bull trout habitat in Gold Creek, very minor environmental impacts and a minimal cost to construct. As part of the EIS document a Federal 4F analysis should also be done to evaluate the project's impact on recreational areas.